



Week 5 Background – Exploring Ways for Continuous Improvement of your Action Research Project

By this week you should have had provide an opportunity to review your draft action research plan, confer with your site supervisor and reach consensus on your question(s) or topic(s) and design of your action research plan, and uploaded your draft action research plan into your intern plan in the electronic portfolio. This week you will examine and analyze some strategies for assessing your action research project.

You will also have an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned so far in developing your action research project. We will ask you to describe what you have learned about identifying, designing, planning, and beginning to implement your action research project.

Remember, your action research plan, process, progress and project may take several weeks or several months to complete. One of the key goals of this course is providing an effective blueprint, a how to conduct an effective action research project in collaboration with your site supervisor(s), peers, Instructional Associates, and university faculty.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Examine and analyze strategies to assess action research.
- 2) Reflect on lessons learned about developing an action research project.

Performance Outcomes:

- 1) Identify strategies for assessing action research.
- 2) Describe lessons learned about planning an action research project.

Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 5 Assignment.

Tasks	Accomplished	Proficient	Needs Improvement
	The evidence suggests that this work is a "Habit of Mind." The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.	The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.	The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.
Action Research – Identifying quality indicators assessing action research	Students identify all five quality indicators and describe how each indicator may be used to assess and improve their actions research. To be accomplished, each student also discusses how he or she can use these indicators to improve their action research plan. (10 Points)	Student briefly identifies the five quality indicators, but does not discuss how the indicators may improve his or her action research plan. Student may receive one extra point if he or she describes how he or she may use the indicators to improve the action research. (5 – 9 Points)	Student only describes some of the quality indicators and does not discuss how the strategies may improve his or her action research plan. (0 – 4 Points)
Final Reflection	Students write a thorough reflection, at least one page in length, highlighting what has been learned in this action research course, and the student provides at least three references to course resources (e.g., lectures, readings, assignments, discussion boards, electronic searches, blogs, etc.) supporting their reflection. (3 Points)	Students provide a reflection describing what they learned in this course, but fail to provide adequate references supporting their reflection. Adequate references must include at least three references to course resources as sources of their learning. (2 Points)	Students provide a partial description of what they learned in the course but without any references to course resources. (1 Point)
Assignment Mechanics	Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Students demonstrate proper APA style. (3 Points)	Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (2 Points)	Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. (1 Point)

Week Five Assignment, Part 1 – Assessing the quality of inquiry in your action research

In order to continually improve your action research project, the professors are suggesting that you identify and apply some strategies for ongoing assessment of your action research project. This activity should provide you with some strategies to address this ongoing review process. Please read Chapter 6, The Continuing Journey as “Head Learner,” in the Dana text, and carefully review the section “What Are Some Quality Indicators for Practitioner Research,” pp. 179 – 186. Identify each of the quality indicators and describe how this indicator will help you assess your action research.

Workspace

Complete your work for Part 1 of Assignment 5 below. The boxes will expand as you type.

Quality Indicator 1

Context of Study:

I realized that I have only stated my research was on the effects of 3rd and 4th graders. I need to make sure that as I continue my research, it is understood that three classes third and fourth grade are getting a one to one environment and three classrooms from each grade level are not getting a one to one environment this first year. I will use these classrooms to better compare data. Since they are at the same school and grade level, I will more accurately have comparison data.

Quality Indicator 2

Wonderings and purpose:

At my school I opened discussion on bringing a one to one laptop environment. I first posed this discussion to the principal. Our vision of a one to one laptop environment was that of each student having his own laptop which was purchased using school moneys (gifted by parents) so students would have the ability to use them at the school at any time. At our school it was decided that they would not be taken home since our home survey suggested every home of our third and fourth graders had an internet connection with at least one computer. After discussion I found a couple of mini laptops that would work for our needs. I then discussed research findings with the technology committee. I explained that we had two laptops one laptop another school in the district was utilizing for their pilot. The other had not been used in our district but had been successfully used in other districts. We decided to go with the latter.

Once we decided the laptop to work with, it was important to decide a way to economically get the laptops purchased. We also wanted to ensure usage once the laptops were assigned a teacher. Conversation began about which grades to do utilize a one to one laptop environment, which teachers would be best to start utilizing the laptops, and how to inform the parents of the new one to one vision. After much discussion with the technology committee we decided to have three teachers from third and three teachers from fourth. This meant half of third and fourth grades were getting to take advantage of the pilot.

Language Arts testing is important in 3rd and 4th grade which was the reasoning behind my decision to pose a research question in this area. I needed to know the best ways to utilize a one to one program to help ensure student success and specifically success in Language Arts.

Quality Indicator 3

Principal Research Design:

While organizing my action research, I wondered about what to use for results. I wanted to ensure that the areas I gathered data would be easily attainable with little interference into classroom procedures and routines. I ended up deciding on using several types:

1. TAKS data from 3rd and 4th grade Language Arts testing
2. Benchmarks which are TAKS like in design but given throughout the year to monitor student progress.
3. Progress monitors which are similar to benchmarks
4. MAPS testing (Measures of Academic Progress)
5. Teacher interviews and surveys
6. Student interviews and surveys

I will take the information/data gathered and compare the three third grade classes that are part of the pilot to the three third grade classes which are not part of the pilot. I will do the same with the fourth grade classes.

Quality Indicator 4

Principal-Researcher Learner

One part that will be difficult is to not gear the data to fit my preconceived notions. I will want the one to one laptop environment to be successful but I will need to keep my own agenda away for the actual research. This is fact finding not opinion based.

It will be important to constantly reflect on the research to enhance the action research model. I plan to keep my reflections on a blog so there are easy to attain and create. I can also utilize the reflections when I do my final writing for a more authentic investigation.

Quality Indicator 5

Implications for practice

Through the inquiry process I need to ensure that I don't stop once the data is collected.

It is important to analyze the data even after the action research is completed.

I also need to consider how I plan to share my findings. Do I present to the faculty or just discuss the findings with those interested parties?

I also need to consider how I plan to utilize the findings. Do we drastically change how we work through the one to one environment or just find best practices amongst the findings?

One piece that worries me is if we find that the one ot one environment does not benefit the students. I am confident now with the preliminary research I have conducted that it will prove a fruitful venture but I can't be completely sure. I am doing staff development with the teachers on best practices so they are prepared when the pilot begins. I do need to make sure that the findings help to balance our one to one environment.

Remember in addition to identifying the quality indicator, be sure to describe any ways you might be able to use these indicators to improve your action research.

Week Five Assignment, Part 2 – Final Reflections

Write a reflection describing highlights of this course and include any insights from the following:

- Lectures
- Readings
- Searches, like electronic searches of topics and questions
- Assignments and activities
- Discussion Board
- Blogs

The reflection may be as long as needed, but should be at least one page in the assignment space below. Also be sure to provide accurate APA citations (e.g., if you reference a passage or quote from one of the texts be sure to give credit so readers may know the source of your citation).

Blog – You may wish to post some of your reflections or provide readers with insights into your future implementation of your action research project.

Workspace

Complete your work for Part 2 of Assignment 5 below. The boxes will expand as you type.

Action research is more than just having a topic and finding information to prove what you already knew. With action research you consider a topic of interest that will benefit further study that will have an impact on your school community. Action research is not a passive form of research. You can find and utilize different types of action research. Four types of action research for principals in an educational setting are through university coursework, superintendent/district meetings, leadership teams, and professional learning communities.

Blogging can be utilized by educational leaders to not only address their own learning but to share their learning with others. Blogs are a wonderful resource for reflection. If a leader wrote their reflection only a few others could benefit from their journal, whereas on a blog, anyone with internet connection can benefit from the leaders perspective. We must think more globally in education and even in our own reflections.

A few years ago my principal and I discussed the utilization of a one-to-one environment for our school. I have been researching the technologies available. Previously I was never impressed with a laptop that could be financially feasible and sustain the technologies utilized. Recently I found the Dell 2110 and networkable cart. After finding the Dell Netbook I was eager to find ways to implement this technology. Working with my principal, we designed a 5 year vision along with getting parent approval for purchasing using gifted money to our school. We decided that utilizing a one to one environment was more practical cognitively and financially with our third and fourth graders at our school that teachers Kindergarten through fourth grade students.

Since we decided on third and fourth grades to begin the one to one laptop initiative we thought it was important to begin with piloting the laptops in two of the six fourth grade classrooms and two of the six third grade classrooms. Since third and fourth are pivotal years in language arts testing, I wanted to ensure the proper implementation of these tools. I have decided to do an action research into how can the utilization of a one to one laptop environment help improve Language Arts in third and fourth grade classrooms.

In the course discussion board, I received several comments concerning my topic of research. Most people were very excited to learn the results of my study. One colleague posed a question that I had not considered. She asked if I planned to survey the students concerning their perceptions of the one to one laptop initiative. After reading her post, I have added a survey component to my action research where I will survey the student in third and fourth grades both students in the pilot and those not in the pilot program.

Since I am doing my research with third and fourth grades, they have many benchmarks and preliminary tests that are similar to TAKS. We also utilize MAPs (Measures of Academic Progress) testing which has a reading section. Third and fourth grade classrooms also do benchmarks and progress monitors throughout the year to assess students skills attained.

To collect quantitative data I am going to compare results between classes utilizing 1-1 and classes not utilizing 1-1 at the same school. For qualitative data, I will discuss with teachers their utilization and their perceptions. I want to also work with the classes and try different Web 2.0 sites for collaboration.

During my action research project I will ensure that I disseminate the information learned. I plan to blog about my findings within my blogger site to ensure that whoever wishes to learn the findings can easily attain the information. In *Leading with Passion and Knowledge*, Dana states that it is important when sharing information from action research to include four components, "1-providing background information, 2-sharing the design of the inquiry, 3-stating the learning and supporting the statements with data, and 4-providing concluding thoughts.(p.163)"

I learned in this course that planned action research will give me an opportunity to organize my findings and to steer me in the correct direction. I will be able to more easily work with my teachers now that I have a stated goal of research.

Reference:

Fichman, Nancy Dana (2009). *Leading with passion and knowledge: The principal as action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.